Version with Markings to Show Changes Made

Please insert the following at the beginning of the Specification after the Title:

This application claims priority from the co-pending U.S. Appl. No. 09/048,841, entitled "Apparatus and Method for Grouping and Prioritizing Voice Messages For Convenient Playback," filed on May 27, 1998, which was issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,335,962 B1 on January 1, 2002.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Kindly amend the claims as follows:

Clean Set of Claims

1. A telephone answering device, comprising:

a telephone line interface;

a controller;

voice message memory adapted to store a plurality of voice messages; and

a secured message authorization module adapted to allow a party calling said telephone answering device to separately secure in a single mailbox a voice message for access only by a user authorized to play back said voice message.

2. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a playback/recorder module adapted to record said voice message.

3. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, further comprising:

an authorized security code table including information relating to an ability of said calling party to separately secure said voice message.

4. The telephone answering device according to claim 3, wherein:

said authorized security code table further includes at least one security code allowing at least one user access to said separately secured voice message.

5. The telephone answering device according to claim 3, wherein:

said authorized security code table is adapted to include call related information relating to at least one calling party authorized to secure a voice message.

6. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, wherein:

said secured message authorization module is adapted to allow said calling party to secure a voice message upon entry of an authorized security code by said calling party.

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7. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, wherein:

said secured message authorization module is adapted to allow said calling party to secure a voice message upon matching of call related information relating to said calling party to at least one pre-stored entry of call related information regarding an ability to secure a voice message.

8. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, wherein:

each of said plurality of voice messages stored in said voice message memory includes header information, said header information including a secure status of said voice message.

9. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a call related information detector/receiver adapted to detect and receive call related information regarding said calling party.

10. The telephone answering device according to claim 1, wherein:

said controller is adapted to compare call related information received regarding said calling party with at least one pre-stored authorized security code to allow said calling party to separately secure said voice message.

11. A method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device, comprising:

prompting a party calling said telephone answering device to enter an authorized security code;

comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said telephone answering device; and

upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code, securing in a single mailbox a recorded voice message for access only by a user authorized to play back said voice message.

12. The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 11, wherein:

said securing is performed after said voice message is recorded.

13. The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 11, wherein:

said securing is performed while said voice message is being recorded.

14. The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 11, wherein:

said securing is performed before said voice message is recorded.

15. The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 11, further comprising:

entering said authorized security code from a telephone being used by said calling party.

16. A method for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device, comprising:

prompting a user of said telephone answering device to enter an authorized security code on a voice message-by-voice message basis for secured voice messages;

comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said telephone answering device; and

upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code, allowing said user access to an underlying voice message secured in a single mailbox of said telephone answering device.

17. The method for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 16, further comprising:

entering said authorized security code for each secured voice message.

18. Apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device, comprising:

means for prompting a party calling said telephone answering device to enter an authorized security code;

means for comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said telephone answering device, and

means for securing in a single mailbox a recorded voice message for access only by a user authorized to play back said voice message, upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code.

19. The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 18, wherein:

said means for securing secures said voice message after said voice message is recorded.

20. The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 18, wherein:

said means for securing secures said voice message while said voice message is being recorded.

21. The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 18, wherein:

said means for securing secures said voice message before said voice message is recorded.

22. The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 18, further comprising:

means for entering said authorized security code from a telephone being used by said calling party.

23. Apparatus for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device, comprising:

means for prompting a user of said telephone answering device to enter an authorized security code on a voice message-by-voice message basis for secured voice messages;

means for comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said voice messaging system; and

means for allowing said user access to an underlying voice message secured in a single mailbox, upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code.

24. The apparatus for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of a telephone answering device according to claim 23, further comprising:

means for entering said authorized security code for each secured voice message.

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1. (Amended) A telephone answering device [voice messaging system], comprising:

a telephone line interface;

a controller;

voice message memory adapted to store a plurality of voice messages; and

a secured message authorization module adapted to allow a [calling] party calling said telephone answering device to separately secure in a single mailbox a voice message for access only by a [an authorized] user authorized to play back said voice message.

2. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, further comprising:

a playback/recorder module adapted to record said voice message.

3. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, further comprising:

an authorized security code table including information relating to an ability of said calling party to separately secure said voice message.

4. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 3, wherein:

said authorized security code table further includes at least one security code allowing at least one user access to said separately secured voice message.

5. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 3, wherein:

said authorized security code table is adapted to include call related information relating to at least one calling party authorized to secure a voice message.

6. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, wherein:

said secured message authorization module is adapted to allow said calling party to secure a voice message upon entry of an authorized security code by said calling party.

7. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, wherein:

said secured message authorization module is adapted to allow said calling party to secure a voice message upon matching of call related information relating to said calling party to at least one pre-stored entry of call related information regarding an ability to secure a voice message.

8. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, wherein:

each of said plurality of voice messages stored in said voice message memory includes header information, said header information including a secure status of said voice message.

9. (Amended) The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, further comprising:

a call related information detector/receiver adapted to detect and receive call related information regarding said calling party.

10. The telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 1, wherein:

said controller is adapted to compare call related information received regarding said calling party with at least one pre-stored authorized security code to allow said calling party to separately secure said voice message.

11. (Amended) A method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system], comprising:

prompting a [calling] party calling said telephone answering device to enter an authorized security code;

comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said telephone answering device [voice messaging system]; and

upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code, securing in a single mailbox a recorded voice message for access only by a user authorized to play back said voice message.

12. (Amended) The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 11, wherein:

said securing is performed after said voice message is recorded.

13. (Amended) The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 11, wherein:

said securing is performed while said voice message is being recorded.

14. (Amended) The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 11, wherein:

said securing is performed before said voice message is recorded.

15. (Amended) The method for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 11, further comprising:

entering said authorized security code from a telephone being used by said calling party.

16. (Amended) A method for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system], comprising:

prompting a user of said telephone answering device [voice messaging system] to enter an authorized security code on a voice message-by-voice message basis for secured voice messages;

comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said telephone answering device [voice messaging system]; and

upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code, allowing said user access to an underlying [secured] voice message secured in a single mailbox of said telephone answering device.

17. (Amended) The method for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 16, further comprising:

entering said authorized security code for each secured voice message.

18. (Amended) Apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system], comprising:

means for prompting a [calling] party calling said telephone answering device to enter an authorized security code;

means for comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said telephone answering device [voice messaging system]; and

means for securing in a single mailbox of said telephone answering device a recorded voice message for access only by a user authorized to play back said voice message, upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code.

19. (Amended) The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 18, wherein:

said means for securing secures said voice message after said voice message is recorded.

20. (Amended) The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 18, wherein:

said means for securing secures said voice message while said voice message is being recorded.

21. (Amended) The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 18, wherein:

said means for securing secures said voice message before said voice message is recorded.

22. (Amended) The apparatus for securing a voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 18, further comprising:

means for entering said authorized security code from a telephone being used by said calling party.

23. (Amended) Apparatus for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system], comprising:

means for prompting a user of said telephone answering device [voice messaging system] to enter an authorized security code on a voice message-by-voice message basis for secured voice messages;

means for comparing an entered authorized security code to at least one pre-stored authorized security code accessible by said voice messaging system; and

means for allowing said user access to an underlying [secured] voice message secured in a single mailbox, upon matching said entered authorized security code with said at least one pre-stored authorized security code.

24. (Amended) The apparatus for accessing a secured voice message in a single mailbox of [on] a telephone answering device [voice messaging system] according to claim 23, further comprising:

means for entering said authorized security code for each secured voice message.